

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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R 141400Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 8523

AMCONSUL DOUALA BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 1725

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, BG

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED GOG AMBASSADOR TO US

REF: LIBREVILLE 0904

1. COUNSUL MITHOEFER FAITHFULLY CALLED ON RENE KOMBILA DURING EACH HIS THREE BATA TRIPS, WHICH PROBABLY QUALIFIES IN E G CONTEXT OF KNOWING SOMEONE WILL AND CONSIDERING HIM "OLD FRIEND." BELIEVE PARA 2 REFTEL SUCCINCT SUM-UP. HE MODERATE TO HEAVY DRINKER, BRANDY OR WHISKEY SODA, BUT DOES NOT SMOKE. HE ALWAYS GENIAL HOST, WHO IN SPITE EIGHT YEARS E G APPEARED MAINTAIN SENSE HUMOR.

2. ON FIRST MEETING OVER YEAR AGO, KOMBILA COMPLAINED HIS LONG-SUFFERING BATA SERVICE. HE SAID THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY INTERVENED WITH PRESIDENT BONGO FOR ANOTHER ASSIGNMENT AND, AFTER PROMISING TO LOOK INTO MATTER, BONGO LATER TOLD HIM HE COULD NOT BE TRANSFERRED UNTIL REPLACEMENT FOUND.

3. ON MITHOEFER'S LAST, FATAL BATA TRIP MARCH 4, KOMBILA WAS OVERJOYED AS HE HAD JUST LEARNED THAT HE WAS TO BE TRANSFERRED. ACCORDING TO HIM, HE HAD BEEN NOMINATED AS GABONESE AMBASSADOR ZAIRE, RWANDA, BURUNDI, UGANDA, KENYA, TANZANIA AND PERHAPS OTHER CENTRAL AND EAST AFRICAN COUNTRIES. HE WAS TO HAVE RESIDENCES BOTH ZAIRE AND NAIROBI. HIS WIFE HAD REFUSED SPEND MORE THAN FEW DAYS AT TIME BATA DUE CHILDREN SCHOOLING PROBLEMS AND HER OWN OBVIOUS DISTASTE FRONTIER LIFE. KOMBILA PLEASED HIS FAMILY WOULD AT LAST BE BACK TOGETHER.

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4. FROM REMARKS WHICH WERE MADE AT TIME, THERE IMPLICATION THAT KOMBILA OR HIS WIFE HAD FRIEND OR RELATIVE FAIRLY HIGH POSITION GOG WHO HAD FINALLY GONE BAT FOR HIM IN ORDER LIBERATE HIM FROM BATA AND REWARD HIM FOR LONG YEARS FAITHFUL SERVICE.

5. WHILE KOMBILA CERTAINLY NO HEAVYWEIGHT INTELLECTUALLY, BELIEVE IT WORTH NOTING THAT BATA FAIRLY IMPORTANT GOG CONTEXT. WITH FRONTIER AND REFUGEE PROBLEMS, KOMBILA PROBABLY HAD MORE DIFFICULTIES THAN OTHER REPS. AS CONSUL GENERAL AND EIGHT YEARS SERVICE, HE WAS DOYEN BATA CONSULAR CORPS.

6. WHILE WASHINGTON AMBASSADORSHIP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING FORMER BATA CONSUL GENERAL BOGGLES MIND IN MANY RESPECTS, HE MAY NOT BE TOO FAR BEHIND SOME OF HIS OTHER COLLEAGUES. HE AT LEAST ACCESSIBLE, PERSONABLE AND FRIENDLY. IF HE WILLING GO BAT ON VISA PROBLEM (PARA 5 REFTTEL), OR OTHER AREAS US CONCERN, THEN, UNTIL HE GETS SLAPPED DOWN BY LIBREVILLE, HE MIGHT NOT BE TOO BAD A CHOICE.  
FRIEDMAN

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